

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-24 (Canceled).

25 (Previously Presented). An apparatus comprising:
a network interface to link to a network;
a packet analyzer coupled to said interface to analyze a packet communicated to or from said network;
a characteristic analyzer to analyze a characteristic of packets sent to or from said network, and, based on that characteristic, assign a packet weight, such that different packets are counted differently depending on their weights; and
a device to count the weights of packets communicated to or from a network user.

26 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 25 including a device to determine a list of devices which communicated packets through said network interface.

27 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 25 including a weight definitions store coupled to said packet analyzer, to store weight values for different packet characteristics.

28 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said packet analyzer analyzes packet headers.

29 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 25 including a device to store a series of packet weights correlated to packet characteristics.

30 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 25 to assess a usage charge to a network user.

31 (Previously Presented). A method comprising:
receiving a plurality of packets sent to or from a particular user;
assigning a weight to packets based on a characteristic of the packets; and

determining an accumulated weight based on the number of packets and the weights assigned to the packets.

32 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including using said accumulated weight to assess a usage charge.

33 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including analyzing packet headers to determine said characteristic.

34 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including storing a plurality of weights correlated to particular packet characteristics.

35 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including maintaining a list of devices originating or receiving packets.

36 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including dynamically updating weight definitions for different packet characteristics.

37 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 31 including assigning a weight dependent at least in part on the time when the packet is received or transmitted.

38 [[37]] (Currently Amended). The method of claim 31 including assigning a weight based on the packet's size.

39 [[38]] (Currently Amended). The method of claim 31 including providing a plurality of usage monitors for a network.

40 [[39]] (Currently Amended). A network communications system comprising:
a plurality of network devices;
a plurality of metering devices, each metering device including a network interface,
a packet analyzer coupled to said interface to analyze a packet communicated to or from said

network, a characteristic analyzer to analyze the characteristic of packets sent to or from said network, and, based on that characteristic, assign a packet weight, such that different packets are counted differently depending on their weights, and a device to count the weights of packets communicated to or from a network user; and

a server coupled to the metering devices to assemble metering reports from the metering devices.

41 [[40]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] wherein the ratio of metering devices to network devices is in the range of 1:1 to 1:512.

42 [[41]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] including a device to determine a list of devices which communicated packets through said network interface.

43 [[42]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] including a weight definitions store coupled to said packet analyzer, to store weight values for different packet characteristics.

44 [[43]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] wherein said packet analyzer analyzes packet headers.

45 [[44]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] including a device to store a series of packet weights correlated to packet characteristics.

46 [[45]] (Currently Amended). The system of claim 40 [[39]] to assess a usage charge to a network user.